



THE MIX



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Our Say – Women in the church

In 1995, while launching the Australian Catholic Bishops' research into the participation of women in the Catholic Church in Australia, Cardinal Clancy noted:

We are ... aware, as Pope John Paul II has acknowledged, that the Church's history has often been characterized by mistaken attitudes and actions in this as in other areas; and that the brief period between now and the Church's Year of Jubilee (AD 2000) is an appropriate time for us to acknowledge, repent for and begin to remedy the mistakes of the past.

The four year research project, professionally conducted under the leadership of Dr Marie Macdonald, interviewed women throughout Australia. The results were published under the title of *Woman and Man: One in Christ Jesus*.

In September 2000 the Bishops published their response. They wrote:

We especially wanted to hear the voices of women themselves about their experience of and hopes for participation in the life and mission of

the Church. ... we ... wish to respond as well as we can

This was groundbreaking work by our Bishops' Conference and the Catholic Church in Australia. To our knowledge, no other local Church in the Catholic world has ever completed an equivalent study on the role of women in the Catholic Church. When the United States Catholic Bishops' Conference had attempted a pastoral letter on women in 1992, it failed to get sufficient support from the Conference.

Cardinal Ratzinger, Prefect of the Congregation for the Doctrine of the Faith, recently published his "Letter to the Bishops of the Catholic Church on the Collaboration of Men and Women in the Church and in the World" (May 31, 2004). This Letter, which focuses on women, has much to recommend it. However, like many Vatican statements, it has a disconnected quality to it. Consider, for example, three issues.

Firstly, there is the issue of listening to human experience. The Australian Bishops

went to the women and asked them to speak of their experience. This document shows no signs of having listened to the voices of women. In a radically new situation, such as the human family finds itself in today, we cannot afford not to listen to the voices of the people whom we endeavour to serve and involve in the work of the Kingdom.

Secondly, there is the issue of the need "to acknowledge, repent for and begin to remedy the mistakes of the past". We have come some distance since the thirteenth century when Canon Law enshrined a man's right to beat his wife. The process of critical reflection and reform, however, must go on.

Thirdly, there is the issue of the roles of women in the Catholic Church. The document does not seem to envisage any new possibilities for women in the decision-making, ministerial and teaching functions of the Church, though it does seem to envisage new roles for women in society.

Let us hope that this document is the beginning, not the end, of a conversation. □

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The following is its Mission Statement:

We are believers who are attempting to establish
a forum for conversation within the Catholic Church
of Australia. Our aim is to prompt open exchanges
among the community of believers, mindful of the
diversity of expression of faith in contemporary
Australia. This springs explicitly from the spirit
of Pope John XXIII and Vatican II: "Let there be unity
in what is necessary, freedom in what is unsettled, and
charity in any case". (*Gaudium et Spes*, n.92)

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The Editorial Committee is:

Michael Whelan SM, Geraldine Doogue,
Catherine Hammond, Tim O'Hearn and consultants

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Address all correspondence to:
PO Box 139, Gladsville, NSW 1675, Australia
Tel/Fax: +61 2 9816 4262

Web site: www.catalyst-for-renewal.com.au
catalyst-for-renewal@tpg.com.au



The Four Arrows and the Cross symbolise diversity
giving rise to communion in and through the Paschal
Mystery. Those who are diverse by nature and culture,
in and through Christ find life-giving unity.

Catalyst for Renewal Incorporated publishes *The
Mix* as one of its forums for conversation. All
reasonable expressions of opinion relevant to the
renewal of the Church are welcome. The Editor
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Names must be supplied though, for good reason,
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THE HUMAN FACE

My name is Cyril Drew. Some seventy
years ago, I was an altar boy in a new
church consecrated to St Thomas More,
who had just been canonised.

The church was in my home town in
Southern England.

Forty years later, I was appointed
Principal of St. Thomas More Regional
Catholic College in a suburb of Melbourne.
More has been a mentor for me over the
years, especially as he was a married man.

Monica and I married in 1951 in
Glasgow (we had met when I was in the
army). A year earlier, I had graduated MA
(Hons) History at St Andrews University.

Over the next few years, we welcomed
with joy the arrival of each of our nine
children. Three were born in Scotland, the
other six in South Australia, where we had
migrated in 1956.

In 1967, I was appointed Vice-Principal
of Christ College, the new Catholic
Teachers College in Melbourne. At the
time, I was the *only layperson* on the staff.

The next ten years were 'heady' years in
the wake of the close of the Vatican
Council. Liturgical changes, new
understandings of Church, Scripture and
Religious Education were to the fore.

I was asked to write material for three
correspondence courses centred around
Faith and Spirituality for teachers (under
the auspices of the Catholic Education
Office).

Grading the essays written by mature
students made me aware of the many ways
they were experiencing the faith.

Graduating in Theology and Scripture at
Catholic Theological College in Melbourne
in 1980 enabled me to teach these subjects
to students undertaking B.S.S. Family
Studies and Pastoral Studies.

These studies were in preparation for
work in pastoral areas in parishes and
hospitals. This was in ACU Christ Campus
(1990-1994).

In one of the semesters, we considered
thinkers such as Newman, Merton, Bede
Griffith, Teilhard de Chardin, Henri
Nouwen, Julian of Norwich and the
classical spiritual writers.

Newman's view of conscience and the
place of the laity in the Church were seen as
of special importance in the context of the
times.

In the 1980s, I had been invited onto the
Teacher Development Team in the Catholic
Education Office, facilitating Leadership
and Spirituality Seminars at local and
central level.

I came to realise in these years how
differently the generation of my growing

children viewed the regulations and
structures of the Church from how I had
viewed them some forty years earlier! (I
had thought that such things were set in
concrete...)

For the past ten years, I have been
working as a volunteer in chaplaincy and
pastoral care departments, in both Catholic
and public hospitals.

I am frequently humbled as I listen to
Jews, Moslems and Christians from
differing Faith traditions facing up to life-
threatening and terminal illnesses.

Their trust, faith and hope are often awe-
inspiring.

When I left school over sixty years ago,
in the middle of the Second World
War, my Jesuit Headmaster expressed the
hope that I would 'keep the Faith', and that
I would always remember that God loved
me.

Certainly, the Faith into which I was
born has nourished me, and God's love has
been very tangible — during my years in
the Army, in married and family life, as
also in my academic and professional life.

These days, of course, I experience that
faith differently, and I would express it
differently from how I would have
expressed it at the time of leaving school.

I would now want to agree with Thomas
Merton:

*Our real journey in life is interior
it is a matter of growth/deepening and an
ever-greater surrender to the creative
action of love and grace in our hearts.*



Your Say – Who is my enemy?

Roy Rigotti

“**B**ut I tell you: Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven.” (Mt 5:44).

This has always seemed to be one of the ‘hard sayings’ of Jesus — so counter-intuitive and ‘unnatural’. I see my ‘enemy’ as someone who deliberately wishes to harm me physically or emotionally for his own benefit and satisfaction, someone who intentionally goes out of his way to somehow take advantage over me.

When seen in that light, I can more or less honestly say that I know nobody personally who falls into that category, although I might have ‘enemies’ in a communal sense, such as ‘terrorists’ or ‘burglars’.

So I can take comfort in the idea that I don’t really have any enemies at all and therefore I am not called to ‘love my enemies’. I have defined the problem away by taking a very narrow view of what constitutes an ‘enemy’.

It seems that the dividing line between ‘neighbour’ and ‘enemy’ is very fine indeed, often based on no more than emotional (i.e. non-rational) and subjective response. We condemn on the basis of a feeling or prejudice. Certainly, justice calls for us to love our enemies in these circumstances.

We are familiar with the parable of the Good Samaritan (Lk10:25-37), where the lawyer questions the meaning of the law to ‘love your neighbour as yourself’ by asking “Who is my neighbour?” Jesus goes on to relate the story, ending with the question, “Which of these three do you think was a neighbour to the man who fell into the hands of robbers?”

But the questions could be reversed. Firstly, “Who is my enemy?” And Jesus could have ended the parable with, “Which of these three, the priest, the Levite or the Samaritan, were the enemies of the man who fell into the hands of robbers?” The ones who looked the other way or hurried by for whatever reason could certainly not be called ‘neighbours’.

Seen from this perspective, an enemy could be described as someone who puts his own interests ahead of the imperative to help one who is in need. This thought

makes me uncomfortable.

- How good a neighbour am I?
- Does my self-centredness make me an enemy to someone else?
- How do I feel about someone ‘hating’ me just because I have been selfish?

My hope would be that the person whom I offended would gently challenge me by responding with good grace — not reciprocating in kind. Perhaps that is what ‘loving my enemies’ means!

What about those family quarrels when harsh things are said and criticisms levelled? Surely the disputants in that moment of heat and anger are ‘enemies’ harbouring all kinds of ill-feelings towards each other — this is between people who normally love each other!

It seems that the dividing line between ‘neighbour’ and ‘enemy’ is very fine indeed, often based on no more than emotional (i.e. non-rational) and subjective response. We condemn on the basis of a feeling or prejudice. Certainly, justice calls for us to love our enemies in these circumstances.

Another slant on what it means to ‘love your enemies’ occurred to me after reading an article written by Rev Dr Neil Pembroke (*Jung and the Moral Self: Compass, Vol 37, Summer 2003*). He writes:

All of us have a ‘dark side’. It is that area of our personality that is characterised by morally inadequate traits and tendencies. Jung calls this side the shadow, and he is very aware of the importance of facing it. That which gets repressed has a way of being projected onto others. When this happens, our moral inadequacies appear on the face of the other... To acknowledge our inferiorities is to experience a heavy assault on our self-esteem. Consequently, the shadow self is very often disowned. And when it is disowned it is projected onto others (p 26).

Building on this idea of projection, John Bradshaw, a psychotherapist, suggests that a step towards attaining emotional wholeness can be taken by calling to mind all the people you dislike most (your ‘enemies’!) and analysing what you consider are the reprehensible traits in each person.

Perhaps you uncover characteristics such as aggression, hypocrisy, phoniness, indecision, etc. By engaging with that person, or otherwise reflecting on those traits, you may be led to discover something about yourself and those ‘inferiorities’ which you have repressed. Your ‘enemy’ becomes your ‘teacher’!

[In the same context but at another level, one could speculate about the current state of the world. The American bull, in response to the pinprick of ‘9/11’, goes crashing around the global china shop adding to the store of human misery, and doing incalculable economic and psychological harm to itself and its friends, thus handing the terrorists a stunning victory. How different the outcome if the response had been one of humility and self-examination rather than one of hubris, belligerence and projection!]

‘Loving my enemies’ and forgiving them is not only an act of altruism, but becomes an act of survival and liberation.

It takes but a moment’s reflection to acknowledge that hate, fear, resentfulness, and vindictiveness are like cancers that take possession of our mind, becoming an obstacle to personal growth. It is necessary to confront and overcome these feelings before one can regain one’s freedom and move forward.

When my enemies, real or imagined, arouse these feelings in me, I am imprisoned, unable to reach out, inhibited in my ability to love. Thus ‘loving my enemies’ and forgiving them is not only an act of altruism, but becomes an act of survival and liberation, a letting go of hatred and thoughts of revenge, and a release from the chains that bind.

The familiar words that we pray, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”, say to me that I cannot expect forgiveness for myself unless I first forgive my enemy. Unless I rid myself of all thoughts of revenge and resentment, I cannot be fully open to God’s mercy.

So “Who is my enemy?” At times I fear that I am my own worst enemy, when I fail to forgive, fail to act justly, or fail to act with love.

Roy Rigotti is a member of the Executive Committee of Catalyst for Renewal.

“The Mix is a source of stimulation to thinking, and encouragement to ‘hang in there’, when dipping out seems inviting!”

G Penningtonbond, Castlemaine, Vic.

Essay – Towards a spirituality of dialogue

by John L. Allen Jr.

The following is about 50% of the Catholic Common Ground Lecture given June 25 2004 at Catholic University of America, Washington, by John L. Allen Jr, Rome Correspondent for the National Catholic Reporter (USA). Much of Allen's analysis of the state of Catholicism throughout the world has been left out, and the emphasis here is on what he perceives as core elements of a "spirituality of dialogue." The complete text is at the Website www.natcath.org or may be obtained from the Editor by sending a SSA business size envelope.

I am pleased to be among you because I am convinced of the importance of the Common Ground Project, which aims to bring Catholics of differing outlooks and experiences into conversation. I know something of the riches of this enterprise. The greatest blessing of my job, in fact, is that it gives me occasion to talk to Catholics of all shapes and sizes. In Rome, I move in and out of the Holy See, the pontifical universities, religious communities, the diplomatic world, non-governmental organizations and the Italian ecclesiastical scene. I spend time with progressive social justice groups, traditionalist liturgical movements, neo-conservative political circles, and dynamic charismatic movements, not to mention Catholics from widely differing cultures and linguistic groups, and I never feel that I have to choose among them. Quite the contrary, my instinct tells me they are all valuable parts of the *koinonia*, perhaps none holding the final answer to the problems facing the Church. The acrimony I sometimes find as I cross these lines pains me. I worry that the "spirituality of communion" to which the Holy Father calls us is honored more in the breach than the observance.

These perceptions have been strengthened by my experience of lecturing fairly widely across the United States in the last three years. The subject of the Vatican and the papacy is of broad appeal, and hence I draw fairly mixed audiences, with Catholics from all points of view. When it comes time for discussion, I am often startled at how quickly things degenerate into disputation. The alarming phenomenon is not merely that Catholics seem angry with one another, but that they increasingly seem to be speaking separate languages. Self-identified 'progressive' Catholics read their own publications, listen to their own speakers, attend their own conferences, and think

their own thoughts. Self-identified 'conservatives' do the same thing. Hence when you bring people from these two camps into the same room, they have moved so far down separate paths that even if there is good will for a conversation, quite often a shared intellectual and cultural framework is missing.

In all this, the discussion in the Church reflects the increasingly arid discourse in the broader culture. Philosopher Alasdair MacIntyre has described the phenomenon well:

The self-assertive shrillness of protest arises because . . . protestors can never win an argument: the indignant self-righteousness of protest arises because . . . the protestors can never lose an argument either. Hence the utterance of protest is characteristically addressed to those who already share the protestors' premises. . . . Protestors rarely have anyone else to talk to but themselves.

For all these reasons, I find myself reflecting much these days about the need for shared spaces of information and conversation, and all the more convinced that Common Ground is important.

...the line that truly stung came when he accused me of "Manichean journalism." He meant that I was locked in a dualistic mentality in which Ratzinger was consistently wrong and his critics consistently right...

As a journalist, it's my job to ask difficult questions, so let me now ask one aloud, prompted by this last point about the absence of spaces for dialogue: 'Why didn't Common Ground work?' Please don't misunderstand; I know the Common Ground initiative does very important things. Gathering us here this evening is a splendid case in point. At the same time, however, most observers would probably agree that measured against the aspirations of Cardinal Joseph Bernardin, which were to transform the public conversation in the American Church, the Common Ground initiative has not had the desired impact. If anything, we are more polarized, more strangers to one another, today than when the project began. So, the tough question: Why?

I have a hunch. I think the proper analogy may be to substance abuse – people can't be helped if they don't want help.

Similarly, a dialogue program is of no use to people convinced they have nothing to learn from one another. Perhaps, therefore, American Catholics haven't yet "bottomed out." They have not had the kind of illumination, the "ah-hah" moment, in which they grasped the sterility of ideological warfare.

I wish I had a formula for manufacturing such illumination on a mass scale. Instead, all I can offer is my personal story, in the hope that it might be indicative of something. My "conversion" to dialogue originated in a sort of "bottoming out." It came with the publication of my biography of Cardinal Joseph Ratzinger, issued by Continuum in 2000 and titled *The Vatican's Enforcer of the Faith*. The first major review appeared in *Commonweal*, authored by another of my distinguished predecessors in this lecture series, Fr. Joseph Komonchak.

It was not, let me be candid, a positive review. Fr. Komonchak pointed out a number of shortcomings and a few errors, but the line that truly stung came when he accused me of "Manichean journalism." He meant that I was locked in a dualistic mentality in which Ratzinger was consistently wrong and his critics consistently right. I was initially crushed, then furious.

I re-read the book with Fr. Komonchak criticism in mind, however, and reached the sobering conclusion that he was correct. The book, which I modestly believe is not without its merits, is nevertheless too often written in a "good guys and bad guys" style that vilifies the cardinal. It took Fr. Komonchak pointing this out, publicly and bluntly, for me to ask myself, "Is this the kind of journalist I want to be?" My answer was no, and I hope that in the years since I have come to appreciate more of those shades of gray that Fr. Komonchak rightly insists are always part of the story. (I will not embarrass Fr. Komonchak by asking for his evaluation of my performance!)

My point is that it is unpredictable what will produce change in the human heart. In some fashion, Catholics need to be brought to see how their blinders and prejudices, far from safeguarding the faith, actually impede full Catholicity. Again, I say: I do not know how to engineer this, but if I were a pastor or spiritual director or bishop these days, I would be spending a great deal of time pondering the outlines of a "spirituality of dialogue." We must have a spirituality before a program for dialogue can realize its potential.

Let me suggest five elements that seem to be at the core of such a spirituality. The first is a dose of epistemological humility. We live in an era of instant opinion, where everyone is expected to have an opinion on every topic under the sun. The raw truth, however, is that we don't know everything. We have to re-learn the discipline of withholding final judgment, realizing that we may not always have the requisite data or reflection to draw definitive conclusions.

This is not a plea for relativism; where reason shows something to be true, or scripture and tradition posit something as definitive, the mind should not hold back assent. But even in those cases, there may be implications or dimensions we have missed, and dialogue can reveal them to us. Dialogue is, in other words, an essential element of the search for truth, but only if we are open to being shaped by the experience.

Second is a solid formation in Catholic tradition, as a means of creating a common language. Allow me to quote Franciscan Fr. David Jaeger, the chief negotiator for the Holy See in its relations with the Israeli government and a noted canonist. Jaeger writes:

The essential condition is learning in Scripture and Tradition, the Fathers and the Doctors. There were theological disputations in the past, but the disputants had precisely this, common ground, their common learning. Nowadays I observe that all too often the shouting match is between "gut" conservatives and "gut" liberals, whose common ground is their shared ignorance. I myself am very conservative doctrinally, yet, as a seminary professor in the late eighties and nineties, I was surprised to see that my would-be "conservative" students invariably assumed that the most extreme position on everything was always the most Catholic, without any understanding of the Tradition. The solution is a renewed emphasis on the common ground of humanistic and Christian learning, so that we do not engage in "political" negotiation, but in a responsible "searching of the Scriptures."

I don't have Jaeger's erudition, but I can only echo his conclusion. This, by the way, is one of the eternal problems in trying to explain Vatican documents to the American media market. The documents assume a classic Aristotelian/Thomistic cultural formation, while typical American responses to them, at least at the popular level, come out of a liberal, democratic worldview. The result is often misunderstanding.

Third, a proper spirituality of dialogue also requires patience. On this point, former Dominican Master General Fr. Timothy Radcliffe writes:

There can only be dialogue if we take time. It

took 400 years for the Christology of Chalcedon to emerge. If we disagree with someone then one cannot make progress if one has put down a 20 minute meeting in the diary. The crucial issue is this: to what do we give that most precious gift which is time? God only gives us a little of it: 27,000 days on average. How shall we use them? If the unity of the Church is important, then we need to give time to those with whom we tussle, time to understand and to be challenged. A culture of activism means not just that we are all too busy, but that we are busy doing what is not perhaps so important.

Fourth, a spirituality of dialogue requires perspective, meaning the capacity to see issues through the eyes of others. This is a critical quality in a global Church with 1.1 billion members, a point brought home during the peak of the American sexual abuse crisis in Spring 2002. As you will recall, there was a drumbeat of criticism in the American press and in activist Catholic circles because the Vatican was not directly engaged. Officials of the Holy See, including the Holy Father himself, were sometimes assumed to be apathetic, out of touch, or even complicit in the cover-up.

...a spirituality of dialogue requires perspective, meaning the capacity to see issues through the eyes of others...

I was in Rome during that period, however, and seen from there, the most important religion story of Spring 2002 was not the American situation, but the 39-day standoff between Israelis and Palestinians at Bethlehem's Basilica of the Nativity. This was the drama on the front pages of newspapers, and the lead item on the evening news. While Americans were frustrated that the Holy See did not have a laser-beam focus on their crisis, some in the Vatican were equally shocked that the fate of the holy sites did not seem important to the American Catholic community. After all, America has enormous influence in the region, and the fate of their coreligionists in the Holy Land should have been of concern to American Catholics, yet few spoke out. In the end, a bloody denouement was narrowly avoided. One may argue that the Vatican's priorities should have been elsewhere, but no intelligent debate is possible until the perspective of the other party is properly understood.

Fifth and finally, we must foster a spirituality of dialogue that does not come at the expense of a full-bodied expression of Catholic identity. There is no future for dialogue if convinced Catholics sense the

price of admission is setting aside their convictions. If dialogue means we have to go fuzzy on abortion, to take one obvious example, it is dead.

To return to our earlier question, why didn't Common Ground work? It's not because it failed to respond to a real need. In fact, I sense a deeply felt desire among Catholics to overcome our internal bickering and divisions. That desire, however, is not the only, and probably not the strongest, trend coursing through Christianity. Today, I would assert that the strongest single impulse in the Christian community pivots on identity – the desire for a robust assertion of what it means to be a Christian. You can't explain the phenomenal success of "The Passion of the Christ" without understanding this impulse. It is perhaps most strongly felt by younger generations whose members did not acquire a strong sense of identity either in the home or in school, even Catholic schools.

Hence the spirituality of dialogue needed is one that combines a vigorous assertion of identity, opening up our distinctive language and rituals and worldview to those who hunger for them, without ending up in a "Taliban Catholicism" that knows only how to excoriate and condemn.

Let me end with a final reflection. Normal American ambivalence about Roman authority was given a turbo charge by the sex abuse crisis. A May 2003 poll in *The Boston Globe* found that 39 percent of Catholics in the Boston area would support the creation of an American Catholic Church independent of the Vatican. The news is actually worse, because among Catholics aged 18-39, the proposal for cutting ties with Rome rises to 50.9 percent. Granted that attitudes in Boston are sharper than elsewhere, this finding should be alarming for anyone concerned with *communio* between the universal and the local Church.

Certainly, a formal schism is unlikely. But if present antagonisms fester, a cycle of recrimination and suspicion could result, producing an undeclared rupture such as the Catholic world has already seen in places such as Holland, Germany and Austria.

There is no more urgent task than putting the Church in dialogue with itself, at all levels and across all divisions. My hope is fired by gatherings such as this one, in which good will and devotion to the *koinonia* is so clear. For all of our faults, American Catholicism remains resilient and resourceful. We face a wounded civic culture in need of the contributions that a unified Catholic voice can bring. May the quest for a spirituality of dialogue lead us into that long-awaited "Catholic moment."

Words for a Pilgrim People

“You must love your neighbour as yourself.” (Matthew 22:38.)

□□□

“See, then, ... the transcendent origin of the dialogue. It is found in the very plan of God. Religion, of its very nature, is a relationship between God and humanity. Prayer expresses such a relationship in dialogue. Revelation, i.e., the supernatural relationship which God Himself, on His own initiative, has established with the human race, can be represented as a dialogue in which the Word of God is expressed in the Incarnation and therefore in the Gospel. The fatherly and holy conversation between God and humanity, interrupted by original sin, has been marvelously resumed in the course of history. The history of salvation narrates exactly this long and changing dialogue which begins with God and brings to humanity a many-splendored conversation. It is in this conversation of Christ in the midst of the human family that God allows us to understand something of Himself, the mystery of His life, unique in its essence, trinitarian in its persons; and He tells us finally how He wishes to be known; He is Love; and how He wishes to be honored and served by us: Love is our supreme commandment. The dialogue thus takes on full meaning and offers grounds for confidence. The child is invited to it; the mystic finds a full outlet in it.” (Pope Paul VI, *Ecclesiam Suam* (August 6, 1964), 70.)

□□□

“(Hope is) a state of mind, not a state of the world. ... it is a dimension of the soul, and it is not essentially dependent upon some particular observation of the world or estimate of the situation . . . It is an orientation of the spirit, an orientation of the heart; it transcends the world that is immediately experienced, ... It is not the conviction that some thing will turn out well, but the certainty that something makes sense, regardless of how it turns out”. (Vaclav Havel cited by Seamus Heaney, *The Redress of Poetry*, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1995, 4.)

□□□

The best modern scholarship believes Luke’s Gospel is probably written at the end of the first century in Antioch. The community is comprised mostly of Gentile Christians, a mixture of rich and poor. They have heard of the history of God’s people and God’s promises. They have also heard of the destruction of the temple in Jerusalem. Luke’s challenge is one that faces anyone who must tell the story: How do you speak of the triumph of the fidelity of God in the face of the human experience of the apparent absence of God, and how do you speak of the victory of God’s love and goodness in the shadow of the Cross? The first step in responding to this challenge is to point to the heart of the message. What does Jesus actually proclaim and how does he embody it in his life and death?

On the twenty-fourth Sunday of the year (Cycle C), we meditate on chapter 15 of Luke’s Gospel. There is probably no other text in the Gospels that so concisely points to the essence of the Gospel. The first lines hold the key: “The tax collectors and sinners, meanwhile, were all seeking the company of Jesus to hear what he had to say, and the Pharisees and the scribes complained. ‘This man,’ they said, ‘welcomes sinners and eats with them.’” This raises some questions. For example: Why are the outcasts attracted to Jesus? Why do they want to hear his teaching? Why are they not attracted to the religious authorities? Why do they not want to hear their teaching?

Various thoughts might arise in response to such questions. When we find our identity in a role rather than through relationships, we are very vulnerable to anxiety when people question the system that gives us the role. The religious authorities feel threatened by the very presence of Jesus. It is not so much what he does or says, it is more a matter of his very presence. Jesus finds his identity in his relationship with the Father and his vocation to share that relationship. He does not need these authorities to tell him who he is.

We are most likely to hear the message of Jesus, the one who brings freedom, when we feel in our very experience of living the need for that freedom. If we feel as though we do not need to be liberated, the Good News is not going to make a whole lot of sense. If, on the contrary, we have come to a deep appreciation of our neediness, we will hunger for that news, we will not be able to get enough of it, we will seek out the one who can speak that message of liberation. It is not surprising that the downtrodden and oppressed are attracted to Jesus. It is also not surprising that he “welcomes” them. □

The Tradition – Compunction

The Benedictine historian, Jean Leclercq, notes that “medieval monastic literature is in large part a literature of compunction, where the aim is to possess, to increase, and communicate the desire for God.” The English word “compunction” comes from the Latin word “pungere”, meaning “to pierce”. Leclercq goes on to speak of the nature of this experience: “At the root of this concept of the Christian life is found a lively awareness of man’s misery: a lived consciousness, an experienced knowledge. The first result of experiencing the human condition, for the Christian who knows how to interpret it, is humility, in other words, detachment from the world, from ourselves, and from our sins, and the consciousness of our need for God. Such is compunction under its double aspect: compunction of fear, compunction of desire. Compunction becomes pain of the spirit, a suffering resulting simultaneously from two causes: the existence of sin and our own tendency towards sin ... and the existence of our desire for God.”

“The first result of experiencing the human condition, for the Christian who knows how to interpret it, is humility ...”

The monastic guides encourage us to seek an honest self-awareness. In true self-knowledge we will know both our need for God and God’s liberating mercy. □

Catalyst Calendar

(Info: Pauline on 02 9816 4262)

SIP Meetings

SIP Promoter – Terry O’Loughlin on (02) 9816 4262 or (02) 9816 5091.

Email: terry_catalyst@hotmail.com

<http://groups.msn.com/SpiritualityinthePub>
NSW and ACT – 7.30-9.00pm unless specified:

◦ **Albury** New Albury Hotel, Kiewa St October 12 “Managing Risk” John Tudor & tba (Info: Joan 6021 6880).

◦ **Armidale** Wicklow Hotel (Info: Jenny 6772 6516).

◦ **Ballina** Paddy McGinty’s Pub (Info: Anne anne@ballinacatholicchurch.org.au)

◦ **Bowral** The Grand Bar and Brasserie (Info: Julian 4861 4649).

◦ **Campbelltown** Campbelltown Catholic Club September 8 “Is Christian action worth it?” John Brentnall & Neil Ormerod (Info: Rosemary 9603 2975).

◦ **Canberra** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry as above.

◦ **Engadine** – Engadine RSL September 15 tba (Info: Elizabeth 9520 0617 or Annette 9548 2475).

◦ **Five Dock** The Illinois Hotel, Cnr Parattatta Rd & Arlington St September 29 “Interrupted Journeys” Alan Gill & Nora Huppert (Info: Susanna 9798 8071).

◦ **Goulburn** Soldiers Club September 14 “Personal Integrity & Justice” Tim & Margaret O’Hearn (Info: Tony 4822 2636).

◦ **Jamberoo** The Jamberoo Hotel September 13 “The Road to Recovery” Terry O’Connell & Phil Burgess (Info Gabrielle 4232 2735).

◦ **Kincumber** The Kincumber Hotel, Avoca Drive October 5 “The Eye of the Storm” Kate Scholl & tba (Info: Clair 4333 7117 or Sue 4334 3174).

◦ **Lismore** Mary Gilhooley’s Pub (Info: Lynne 6625 1195).

◦ **Newport** – Newport Arms Hotel October 28 “Acquisition & Materialism” Geraldine Doogue & Fr Michael Whelan (Info: Terry 9973 1192).

◦ **Northern Sydney** Union Hotel, Pacific Hwy & West St, North Sydney September 20 “Generosity of Spirit” Rev Peter Maher & Julie Morgan (Info: Michelle 9958 5963).

◦ **Paddington** Theme “Walking the Mystics at the Edge” Maureen Chen & Michael Kelly (Info: Marea 9387 3152).

◦ **Penrith** Golf Club October 20 “Being Catholic Today” Martin Teulan & Wilga & Bill Casey (Info: Sue 9760 2324).

◦ **Rouse Hill** The Mean Fiddler on Windsor Rd October 5 “Connecting with other Traditions” Sr Pauline Rae & tba (Info: Maria 9680 2220 (H))

◦ **Rydalmere** – Rydalmere Bowling Club “Search for the Sacred” (Info: Janice 9684 4109).

◦ **St George** Kings Head Tavern South Hurstville September 22 “Resilience – My Grace is enough for you” Sr Margaret Hinchey & Patrick Kirkwood (Info: Ken 9580 1183).

◦ **Waitara** – The Blue Gum Hotel September 15 “Where is: the Life we have lost in living? the wisdom we have lost in knowledge? the knowledge we have lost in information?” Geraldine Doogue & tba (Info: Carmel 9477 4824).

VIC:

◦ **Ballarat** North Midlands Golf Club, Heinz Lane, Second Wednesday each month 12.00-2pm (Info: Kevin 5332 1697).

◦ **Bendigo** Boundary Hotel (Info: Helen 0409 212 009).

◦ **Clayton** The Notting Hotel, 8pm-9.30pm September 21 “Possibilities for Power of the Laity” Sr Denise Desmarchelier (Info: Jo 9807 1912).

◦ **Colac** Central Hotel-Motel (Info: Clare 5236 2091).

◦ **Darebin** Olympic Hotel, Cnr Bell & Albert Streets, Preston, September 15 “Parenting under Pressure” Bernie Geary & tba (Info: John 9478 3642).

◦ **Echuca** The power of my story through the window of ... The Dock Hotel November 23 (Info: Carmel 5482 1342).

◦ **Fitzroy** Pumphouse Hotel, 128 Nicholson St, 8pm-9.30pm (Info: Denise 9816 3001)

◦ **Goulburn Valley** Terminus Hotel (Shepparton) 7.30pm-9pm October 25 “Women in the Church – Patriarchy vs Equality” Mary Jo Fortuna & John Collins (Info: Kerry 0408 579 904).

◦ **Heidelberg** Tower Hotel, Alphington, 8pm-9.30pm October 13 “Jesuit Spirituality” Speakers from Campion House (Info: Susie 9859 6184).

◦ **Mornington** The Royal Hotel, Victoriana Room, 770 The Esplanade, 8pm-9.30pm, (Info: Colleen 9775 2163. or Carole 5976 1024).

◦ **Southern** Finbar’s Irish Pub, Cnr Bay &

New Streets, Brighton, 7.30pm-9pm October 27 “Powerless in a Free Society: Living the pain & changing the focus” Bill Firman & Katharine Massam (Info: Kevin 9776 2705).

◦ **Western Victoria** on Hyde, Yarraville 7.30pm September 14 “My Journey to the West” Fartun Farah & Trung Nguyen (Info: Anne 9312 3595).

Other States

◦ **Devonport (TAS)** Molly Malone’s Irish Pub, (Info: Graham 6424 8286).

◦ **Hobart** North Moonah Café Bar & Bistro October 6 “Retreats” tba (Info: Gwaine 6228 2679).

◦ **Brisbane (QLD)** – **Currently suspended** – awaiting the formation of a new committee. Anyone interested contact Terry above.

◦ **Perth (WA)** The Elephant and the Wheelbarrow, cnr Francis & Lake Sts, Northbridge 7.30-9.10pm (Info: Andrew 0422 305 742).

◦ **Adelaide (SA)** Criterion Hotel, 137 King William Street September 13 “Politics: What hope is there?” John Bannon & Trish Worth (Info: Michelle 8278 6353).

◦ **Mylor (SA)** Warrawong Earth Sanctuary, Stock Rd October 5 “The Spiritual Journey” Aisha Burrell & Gabe Edwards (Info: Gerald 8388 5957).

Other Matters and Events

◦ **The Aquinas Academy** adult education centre, 141 Harrington St Sydney, programs day and evening, special emphasis on spirituality. Michael Whelan SM Director (Info: Sue on 02 9247 4651).

◦ **St Mary’s Towers Retreat Centre**, Douglas Park, Sept 17-23 & 24-30 guided retreats; Oct 1-9 Life’s Healing Journey/directed retreat; Oct 15-17 Taize prayer weekend; Oct 20-26 Spirituality of Ageing retreat (Info: 02 4630 9159).

◦ **Mount St Benedict Centre** Pennant Hills September 19 – 26 “Seasons of Hope” guided retreat for those 70 years of age or over (Info: 9484 6208).

◦ **“The Reception of Vatican II in Australia since 1965”** Dr Richard Lennan, September 12, 2.30pm, St Mary’s Cathedral School Sydney (Info: 4323 1367).

There was a small ring found at the last Catalyst Dinner (July 23) in Sydney. If anyone knows who the owner might be, please ring the office on 9816 4262.

Recommended

Margo Kingston, *Not Happy, John: Defending Our Democracy*, Penguin Books, 2004, 466 pages, index, endnotes, pb, \$24.95.

The Irish statesman, Edmund Burke (1729-97) said that all we need for evil to triumph is for enough good people to do nothing. Kingston's book is about the possible fulfilment of Burke's prophecy in Australia. She believes "our democracy is in a lot of trouble". While her main target is the current prime minister, she also lays blame at the feet of other political leaders. And she offers some most interesting insights from Sir Robert Menzies. The book's style is personal and very readable. Substantial issues are raised and dealt with well. Kingston asks, "why not opt out? Escape. Live simply. Create a beautiful personal space." And therein lies a key to the problem and its solution. In a word, Kingston argues that we each must become part of the conversation, to the best of our abilities. Individualism will kill us. In Chapter 18, "Democracy: Ten Ideas for Change", the reader will find some useful suggestions that are very practical. There is also a lengthy section for further reading, including a number of web sites. Apart from the obvious relevance for the organisation of society at large, this book, by the way, has immense relevance for the organisation of the Catholic Church. Unfortunately Kingston agrees with Rousseau that evil originates in society rather than people. While this promotes romanticism, it does not necessarily detract from the value of the book.

Darrell L Bock, *Breaking the Da Vinci Code: Answers to the Questions Everyone's Asking*, Nelson Books, 2004, 188 pages, hb, \$19.95 at John Garratt (Tel: 1300 650 878).

At the time of writing this notice, Dan Brown's novel, *The Da Vinci Code*, has sold 8 million hard back and 2 million paper back copies. No novel in the history of publishing has ever sold anywhere near this number of copies. It is probably reasonable to suggest that not all those who purchased the book will read it as an inconsequential page-turning mystery, a very light read when you have nothing better to do. The author, Dan Brown, both in his public lectures and in this book, suggests that the Catholic Church has perpetrated a massive fraud by hiding the fact that Jesus was actually married to Mary Magdalene, that they had children and their line persists today. No serious scholar supports any part of Brown's theory. The fact that the book is so popular, however, suggests that we need to take it more seriously than one might take a bit of lightweight pulp fiction. Bock responds well. He is a scholar who is able to write simply. This book is for the non-scholar. Frank Moloney SDB has a helpful foreword to the book. Let us hope Bock's book gets a wide readership. Another good book that exposes the blatant errors of *The Da Vinci Code* is Carl E Olson and Sandra Miesel's *The Da Vinci Hoax* (Ignatius Press, 2004). Religious educationists, chaplains, pastors and parents of teenagers should read at least one of these two books.

Barbara Mraz, *Finding Faith at the Movies*, Moorehouse Publishing (distributed here by Allen and Unwin), 2004, 102 pages, endnotes, pb, \$24.95.

History suggests that, when organised religion and the masses part company, the masses do not cease to be religious, they look in other places. Those of us who have any interest in the future of organised religion ought to develop a keen eye for those "other places". There is another reason that is perhaps even more important for looking in those "other places". Some of the "other places" actually contain extraordinarily rich pickings which mainstream religion often ignores. Barbara Mraz' little book points to one potentially rich area of largely implicit, but nonetheless real and rich, expressions of religion and spirituality. Good movies, like good art and literature, always have a transcendent quality. They remind us of the human ground that is the raw stuff for grace to work on and with. This book is written for group study of particular movies, such as *American Beauty*, *Saving Private Ryan*, *Quiz Show*, *Dead Man Walking*, *To Kill a Mockingbird* and *A River Runs Through It*. Mraz gives an introductory statement to each movie, suggests specific sections to show, offers relevant Scriptural texts, discussion questions and further activities. This is an excellent little aid for RE teachers, to be used in the class room or on retreat. It will also prompt the more creative readers to develop similar study notes for more recent movies. Highly recommended.

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ECCLESIAM SUAM: 1964-2004

Forty years ago, on August 6, 1964, Pope Paul VI published his first encyclical, *Ecclesiam Suam* (*ES*). His stated intention was "the task of showing more clearly to all the Church's importance for the salvation of humankind, and her heartfelt desire that Church and humankind should meet each other and should come to know and love each other". *ES* elaborates a theme that was dear to John XXIII. The latter had called the Council, not to define dogmas or condemn errors, but to prompt the Church to take stock of itself, its fidelity to the Gospel and its place in the world. The English word "dialogue" appears 68 times in the official English translation of *ES*, and the word "conversation" 10 times. They both translate the Latin word "colloquium". (It is difficult to know why the Latin word "colloquium", normally translated as "conversation", is here translated mostly as "dialogue". In #70 of *ES*, for example, "conversation" and "dialogue" are used to translate the same word, "colloquium".) *ES* offers a definition: "this internal drive of charity which tends to become the external gift of charity we will give the name of 'colloquium' (dialogue/conversation), which has in these days come into common usage" (#64). In speaking of the "colloquium" we must develop, *ES* says: "We wish to give, not full treatment to topics, but proper dispositions to hearts" (#66). What "dispositions (of) heart" might Paul VI be speaking of here? What difference might it make to my involvement in my family, in my work place, in my community or in my parish if it is based on the notion of "colloquium"?

Michael Whelan SM